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Environmental Integration in the Implementation of Structural Funds Programmes in Finland

Tuomas Kallio

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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FOREWORD

This report will provide an environmental perspective to the national Competitiveness and Employment Programmes within the European Union Structural Funds programming period 2007–2013. The report will pay particular attention to the project selection criteria in the programmes, the environmental assessment process and the viability of the assessment of the effects of plans and programmes on the environment, or the strategic environmental assessment (SEA), in the programme work. The purpose of this report is to suggest development measures for the programming period under review and to facilitate later environmental evaluation of programme implementation.

According to our findings, the environmental perspective was quite well represented in the programme implementation. Climate change was not a recognised factor when preparations for the programming period were underway, as is evident in the project selection criteria. The principles of sustainable development were, on the other hand, quite comprehensively acknowledged in the project selection criteria. The improvements proposed in the draft report have since been taken into account in the work of the Monitoring Committees. The monitoring as required under the SEA Act is currently not presented in the required form, and therefore improved presentation of information will be required during the programming period.

The report, particularly the application of the SEA Act, has aroused interest among officials responsible for the environment in the European Union Structural Funds. The research for the report was carried out by Tuomas Kallio from the Finnish Environment Institute, by appointment of the Ministry of the Environment. The work was supervised by Senior Architect Minna Perähuhta and Senior Adviser Jorma Keva.

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Ulla Koski
Director, Spatial Planning

CONTENT

Executive Summary

The report presents a framework for environmental integration in the implementation of European Union structural funds programmes in Finland. The aim is to outline key opportunities for taking the environment into consideration and analyse how the 2007–2013 ERDF Competitiveness and Employment Programmes perform in this respect. Proposals for better environmental integration in the implementation process are made for 2007–2013 and beyond.

The report analyses project selection criteria, environmental assessment of project proposals, environmental monitoring of the programmes, implementation reports and the potential contribution of evaluations. The focus is on selection criteria and monitoring.

All applications for funding will undergo a process of environmental assessment. The assessment is done by the applicant and the authority responsible for making the funding decision. The procedure is essentially the same as in 2000–2006 – the main difference being that now the assessment is carried out using a standard Internet-based checklist.

Compliance with sustainable development is an eligibility criterion in all the programmes. The existing selection criteria sets fail, however, to fully incorporate the environment. Southern Finland was an exception to this rule and can be highlighted as a best practice example. The criteria sets of the other programmes were not particularly transparent and are unlikely to encourage applicants to take the environment and sustainable development into account. Proposals for a more consistent approach are made.

The SEA Act provides that the significant environmental effects of programmes be monitored in such a way as to allow for remedial action if adverse development occurs. The approach of the previous programming period, as well as the measures proposed in the current programming documents, do not meet this requirement.

The report concludes that a conventional indicator approach to monitoring may not be sufficient in the context of structural funds programmes and SEA monitoring. Especially, baseline and performance indicators are insensitive to the (negative) impacts of a programme. Because of the small average size and/or the nature of the projects, establishing project-specific monitoring systems is not usually justifiable. Thus, an approach based on financial indicators is proposed.

The environmental monitoring of the programmes can draw on the data produced in the environmental assessment of project proposals. Climate impacts, for example, could then be monitored by looking at what proportion of the total assistance has been given to projects with climate positive or with climate negative impacts. The necessary information can be acquired from the electronic EURA 2007 monitoring system. The benefit of this approach is that it takes advantage of an established procedure.

It is proposed that a thematic environmental evaluation of the programmes be carried out during the programming period. The evaluation should look both at the progress made on programme sustainability and environmental objectives and at the environmental impacts of the programmes. The effectiveness of the mitigation measures currently in place (environmental assessment of projects, sustainability as an eligibility criterion) should be evaluated as well.

1 Introduction

1.1

Background and Aims

Several structural funds programmes co-funded by the European Union will be implemented in Finland during the programming period 2007–2013 (table 1). This report aims to provide a framework for integrating environmental considerations into the implementation of these programmes. The focus will be on the four Regional Competitiveness and Employment programmes funded from the European Regional Development Fund (hereafter ERDF programmes), but the results can be applied to all types of structural funds programmes as well as to national regional development.

By mandating the consideration of sustainable development at all levels of cohesion policy, the integration principle plays an important role in the programming process. Sustainability has duly been established as a cross-cutting principle guiding both programme preparation and implementation of the Finnish ERDF programmes. In addition, most co-funded programmes have undergone an environmental assessment as laid down in the Act on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (200/2005), hereafter the Strategic Environmental Assessment Act (SEA Act).

At the programme implementation stage, the environment can be taken into account in project selection and programme monitoring. In project selection it is possible to assess the environmental impacts of proposed activities, ensure their sustainability and favour the best environmental performers. Monitoring is a central tool that helps make sure no adverse environmental impacts occur. Further, monitoring is used to collect data on the progress made towards achieving a programme's environmental objectives. The environment is also a key component of programme implementation reports and evaluations.

In terms of environmental integration, the focus has previously been on assessing the impacts of project proposals and on monitoring the attainment of environmental objectives (Savola 2001, Berninger 2002, Tiihonen and Tuhkalainen 2006). As the current programming period comes to an end and the new one begins, it is clear that the role of the environment has grown substantially as a consequence of the SEA Act. Especially the provisions in the act on environmental monitoring have been identified as a particular challenge.

The SEA Act provides that necessary monitoring measures have to be devised during programme preparation as part of the strategic environmental assessment. A recent study showed that the pro-

Table 1. Structural funds programmes in Finland in 2007–2013. Only those programmes that have undergone a full SEA are listed.

Structural Funds Programmes 2007–2013
Regional Competitiveness and Employment (ERDF programmes)
Southern Finland, Western Finland, Eastern Finland, Northern Finland
European Regional Cooperation
North, Botnia–Atlantica, Central Baltic (crossborder) Northern Periphery, Baltic Sea (transnational) Interreg IVC (interregional)
European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI programmes)
Kolarctic, Karelia, Southeast Finland–Russia

posed monitoring systems had serious shortcomings (Kallio 2008). Moreover, experiences from elsewhere in Europe indicate that there is considerable difficulty in fulfilling the monitoring requirements of the European Union's Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive in the context of structural programming (Florido 2008, ENEA 2008).

This report has been prepared at the Finnish Environment Institute as part of a project that sought to analyse how the environment is taken into account in the implementation of Finnish ERDF programmes and to find ways to better incorporate the environment into the implementation process. The work was initiated and financed by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment. A key objective was to develop a framework for SEA monitoring for the 2007–2013 ERDF programmes. This report

- Gives an overview of ways to integrate the environment into programme implementation.
- Describes how the environment is currently taken into consideration.
- Outlines proposals for better environmental integration.

1.2

Structural Funds Programmes and Sustainable Development

The goal of EU cohesion policy (regional and structural policy) is to strive for balanced economic and social development of the Union's regions. The Structural Funds (including the Cohesion Fund) are a central tool of EU regional policy. Approximately 35 percent (350 billion) of the Union's budget will be channelled through the various funds and operational programmes in 2007–2013 (European Commission 2006b). In consequence, great potential exists to steer the Union's economic and social development into a more sustainable direction. In Finland, 17 programmes with a total budget of six billion euros are being implemented during 2007–2013.

Sustainable development is a core principle of EU cohesion policy. The legislation regulating the Structural Funds (Regulation 1083/2006/EC, Art. 17) requires the integration of environmental issues and sustainable development into the preparation and implementation of programmes.

Similarly, adopted guidelines put an emphasis on environmental integration: the Community strategic guidelines on cohesion (Council decision 2006/702/EC) underline the responsibility of Member States and regions to champion sustainable development and to take environmental protection into account when preparing programmes and projects.

The guidelines are specified, inter alia, in the ERDF Regulation (1080/2006 Art. 5) according to which funding under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective shall be targeted at three priorities: 1) innovation and the knowledge economy, 2) environment and risk prevention and 3) access to transport and telecommunication services of general economic interest. Specific environmental goals (priority 2) include stimulating energy efficiency and renewable energy production, promoting clean and sustainable public transport, and protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage in support of socio-economic development and as potential for the development of sustainable tourism.

1.3

Opportunities for Environmental Integration

Applying the integration principle to structural funds programming entails the consideration of environmental issues in both the programme preparation and implementation stage (table 2).

Programme preparation is of prime importance as it is naturally at this stage that main decisions on the envisaged intervention are taken. In practice, environmental goals are relatively well represented in the objectives and priorities of a given programme because they are called for in EU law and policy guidance. Strategic environmental assessment is an additional tool to achieve better environmental integration at this stage (Beyond compliance… 2006, Handbook on SEA 2006). Programme preparation and goal-setting mainly fall outside the scope of this report, however.

Table 2. An overview of ways to integrate environmental considerations into the successive steps of programme preparation and implementation.

Step	Targets and tools
Preparation	Target: objectives and priorities of a programme, eligible activities Tools: EU and national strategic guidelines, region's own needs, ex ante evaluation, strategic environmental assessment
Implementation	Target: project preparation and selection Tools: guidance to applicants and competent bodies, project environmental assessment, project development, selection criteria
Monitoring and evaluation	Target: monitoring, reporting, evaluation Tools: programme monitoring system, annual implementation reports, interim and ex post evaluation

Project selection is a key task of programme implementation. At this stage important opportunities to influence the distribution of assistance still exist. Relevant tools for environmental integration include the environmental assessment of project applications and the use of environmental selection criteria. Both procedures aim to make sure that the financed projects support the principle of environmental sustainability. Section 2 discusses in detail integration in the project preparation and selection stage.

Programme monitoring and evaluation link seamlessly to the programme decision-making process. The purpose of monitoring is to gather feedback information on the performance and impacts of a programme. Environmental monitoring is now based on the SEA Act. The monitoring data, along with other information, is reported in the annual programme implementation reports. Traditionally, the programmes have been subjected to an interim evaluation, which seeks to critically analyse programme performance and propose the necessary adjustments. Monitoring, implementation reports and evaluation are the subjects of Sections 5 and 6.

Environmental integration in programme preparation and implementation is at best a logical and effective process where project selection, monitoring, reporting and evaluations help achieve the sustainability objectives of a programme while keeping negative side effects to a minimum. Making use of the integration principle creates important opportunities for partnerships and thus serves to increase the legitimacy and public image of programming among partners and citizens (Beyond compliance… 2006).

1.4

Key Concepts

Environmental assessment (procedure)	Refers to the rather light and informal environmental assessment of projects proposed for structural funding.
Environmental benefits	An environmentally beneficial project aims to enhance the state of the environment, to increase citizens' awareness of environmental issues or to render pressure-causing activities more sustainable.
Environmental criteria	Environmental selection criteria or criteria used in the environmental assessment of project proposals.
Environmental impact	A positive or negative, direct or indirect impact or side-effect on humans or the state of the environment.
Environmental indicator	A measure describing the environmental impact or pressure factor caused by a programme or a project, or changes in the wider environmental context. Also used to quantify programme performance.
EURA 2007	An Internet-based tool designed for managing and monitoring the Structural Funds programmes in Finland in 2007–2013.
Evaluation	The ex ante, interim or ex post analysis of programmes.
Financial indicator	A monitoring indicator that measures the actual distribution of assistance to different types of projects. For example, the proportion of total funding granted to environmentally beneficial projects.
Horizontal objective or principle	A general, cross-cutting objective or principle that is supposed to penetrate a programme and the related decision-making process.
Integration principle	According to the integration principle, environmental protection is part of all Community policy preparation and implementation (EC Treaty Art. 6).
Intermediary body	A body responsible for delivering a programme. In Finland, this includes, for example, the Regional Councils, the Employment and Economic Development Centres, the Regional Environment Centres, the State Provincial Offices, and the various ministries.
Monitoring indicator	A monitoring indicator measures 1) the results/impacts of a programme (performance or impact indicator), or 2) the changes in the socio-economic or environmental context (baseline, context or macro indicator).
Regional Management Committee	A regional cooperative body responsible for delivering the programme. Representation from key regional actors, especially the various intermediary bodies.
SEA	Strategic environmental assessment. Regulated on the EU level by the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and in Finland by the SEA Act (200/2005).
SEA monitoring	Environmental monitoring of plans and programmes as laid down in Article 10 of the SEA Directive and Section 12 of the SEA Act. Required of all programmes subject to a formal SEA.
Selection criteria	Criteria that are used to appraise project proposals. Can be made use of either in a qualitative appraisal or in project scoring (prioritisation criteria).

2 Project Selection

2.1

Project Preparation and Selection

Project preparation and selection here refers to the opportunities and means available to competent authorities to influence (either directly or indirectly) the content of project applications and projects finally selected for assistance.

From a sustainability point of view, project preparation is a process where environmental considerations can be included in calls for projects, guidance to applicants, project assessment (including environmental assessment), negotiations with the applicant and the terms of assistance. Sustainability-oriented project development should not be seen as limited to projects with a specific environmental dimension (i.e. environmental projects), but should rather be seen as best practice in all project development. The aim is to encourage and commit the applicant to pay heed to environmental considerations in the project plan.

Sustainability-led project development can embody, for example (Berninger 2002, Beyond compliance… 2006):

1) Encouraging environmentally beneficial project ideas.
2) Developing existing ideas in a more sustainable direction.
3) Adding environmental terms of condition to funding decisions.

In terms of sustainability, project development can be either passive (mitigating adverse impacts) or active (maximising benefits) in nature. The passive approach puts the emphasis on fulfilling the minimum requirements of existing norms, guidance and principles. The task of project preparation is then to make sure that an environmental assessment has been carried out and that assistance is not given to projects with significant negative impacts.

At its best, the authorities implementing the programme take a proactive stance to integrating the environment into project proposals and plans. In practice this means that calls for projects and the selection criteria, for example, include an environmental component and are used so that potential applicants become aware of environmental issues and are encouraged to take them into consideration in their applications. It is also possible for an authority to take up the need to incorporate a specific environmental aspect into a project plan in project negotiations. Environmental integration need not be complex – it can, for example, mean waste sorting or the use of renewable energy.

The active role of funding authorities gains weight especially when selection criteria are not working optimally – for example when there is no genuine competition over funding.

Naturally, sustainability-led project development requires that competent authorities take the initiative themselves. Further, it sets requirements on applicants' and programme managers' readiness to assess environmental impacts and incorporate environmentally beneficial measures into project plans.

Based on Finnish experience, the obstacles to sustainability-oriented project development include issues such as lack of commitment, resources and know-how. Organizational commitment varies a lot, project preparation is marred by tight time frames and programme managers have difficulties in identifying the impacts of projects (Savola 2001).

These obstacles could be overcome at least partially through guidance, training and knowledge transfer (Berninger 2002, Beyond compliance… 2006). For example, in the United Kingdom, applicants and project managers have available the expertise of environmental theme managers (Beyond the Defensive… 2006). In Finland a system of organization-specific "EIA managers" has been in place in some regions (see box, page 13, Environmental Assessment of Projects in Southwest Finland).

The following two sections focus on the environmental assessment of project proposals and project selection criteria. It is importance to notice that the effectiveness of these measures is largely dependent on the initiative of the competent authorities (Savola 2001).

2.2

Environmental Assessment of Project Proposals

Assessing the environmental impacts of project proposals is a key component of programme implementation because in the environmental assessment of the programme (SEA) it is possible to identify impacts only at a general level. The rather open character of regional development programmes underlines the importance of assessing proposed measures. In addition to guaranteeing that the principle of sustainable development is respected, environmental assessment heightens the awareness of applicants and authorities of the impacts of their actions. Impact assessment thus brings added value to both the overall programme implementation and to the preparation and implementation of individual measures.

In a nutshell, environmental assessment

- helps the applicant, the competent authority and partners to have a clearer view of the impacts of proposed measures
- supports project preparation and the application of environmental selection criteria
- supports the goal of giving assistance only to projects in line with the principle of sustainability. Helps exclude projects with significant adverse impacts.

The environmental assessment of projects has a logical linkage to the SEA Act. The assessment has the potential to be a measure that is used to prevent, reduce and offset significant environmental impacts (see SEA Decree Section 4 para, 1(7)). The effectiveness of the environmental assessment procedure is also a potential object for monitoring (see Section 3.3).

The environmental assessment of structural funds projects is not to be mixed with the EIA proper (as regulated by the Act (468/1994) and Decree (713/2006) on Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure) concerning projects such as industrial plants, peat production, motorways and so on. In the implementation of a structural funds programme, environmental assessment refers to a rather light and informal procedure where both the applicant and the authority assess the impacts of the projects during project preparation and selection and before a decision on funding is taken.

The EIA Act provides that a party responsible for *any project* must be aware of its environmental impacts (EIA Act Section 25). Competent authorities should also be aware of the impacts of the measures they are granting assistance to. According to the Structural Funds Act (1401/2006, Section 21), the Regional Management Committee is responsible for setting up necessary procedures to ensure that the environmental impacts of proposed activities are assessed before making a decision to finance them. These provisions are flexible in nature – it is the task of the competent authorities to decide the methodology, scope and detail of the assessment.

Procedures to assess the environmental impacts of project proposals were set up during the programme period 2000–2006. The applicants were required to assess the impacts of their projects using a specific EIA checklist (Berninger 2002). The intermediary authorities then reviewed the quality of the assessment and at their own discretion made

an independent assessment. In some regions an EIA panel (consisting of the key authorities and sometimes other partners of an area) was formed to assess the impacts of project proposals or to support and develop the procedure.

Based on the experience of the previous programming period, the main challenges relate to 1) organizations and resources and 2) the quality of the assessment data. The risk is that competent authorities do not feel that the environmental assessment is a useful procedure, but rather a burden to the administration. Earlier reports have raised the question of what kind of projects should be assessed. One issue is whether the assessment should be reserved only for those projects with the most significant impacts (Marjanen 1997, Seppälä 2006, Tiihonen and Tuhkalainen 2006). Ensuring environmental assessment expertise is another issue pertaining to organizations (Savola 2001).

The quality of the assessment data determines its reliability and usability. The impact assessment of projects is complicated by the fact that the impacts are often indirect and even conflicting (Tiihonen and Tuhkalainen 2006). Further, it is clear that assessment data are always subjective. Experience shows that the applicants have a tendency to see the impacts of their projects in a positive light. Also programme managers tend to underline the positive impacts and seem unable or unwilling to bring up the negative effects (Savola 2001, Tiihonen and Tuhkalainen 2006). On the other hand, it is good to notice that the identification of positive impacts is also a key task of environmental assessment and project selection.

The assessment data need not be exact – indicative data are often adequate. A simple quality criterion for the assessment is, for example, whether or not it helps to identify those projects with significant negative impacts (and exclude them from assistance).

2.3 Selection Criteria

This section examines the selection criteria applied in the implementation of the structural funds programmes from the viewpoint of sustainable development and the environment. The aim is to clarify the function and role of the criteria in project selection and put forth the rationale for integrating environmental criteria into the existing criteria sets. Here, environmental criteria means any criteria used in project selection (eligibility checking or scoring) with the aim of promoting the selection of good environmental performers.

The criteria sets currently in use in the ERDF programmes are analysed in Section 2.4 and proposals for amendments are presented in Section 6.1.

Selection criteria are first of all a tool for the implementation of a programme that helps identify the projects that best match the programme objectives. Selection criteria

1) Help check the eligibility of project proposals for funding and
2) Can be used to score projects and prioritise them.

In an ideal situation project scoring functions as an objective tool of the authority making the project selection. It ought to guide decision-making and funds allocation in such a way that the financed measures support optimally the attainment of priority axis and programme-level objectives.

According to the General Provisions Regulation (1083/2006/EC), Art. 65), the programme Monitoring Committees decide on the selection criteria. According to the Structural Funds Act (Section 21), it is the task of Regional Management Committees to draw up annual cooperation plans and include in them decisions on the regional application of the criteria. Further, individual intermediary authorities may have their own additional criteria.

It is essential to make a distinction between eligibility and prioritisation criteria. The task of eligibility criteria is to ensure that basic conditions for

funding are met, whereas prioritisation (scoring) criteria guide the selection of projects that have passed the test of eligibility. Prioritisation criteria are used especially when there is competition over the available funds, that is, when there are more applications than the available assistance can finance. Besides this basic distinction, selection criteria can be divided into socio-economic and environmental criteria, for instance.

In line with the integration principle, it is important that sustainability and environmental considerations are paid due consideration in the project selection process. A good criteria set helps to sort out those applications with undesired effects and, on the other hand, to develop applications so that environmental harm is minimised. At the same time, selection criteria that have an environmental component encourage applicants to take the environment into account and make it possible to give preference to good environmental performers.

An important conceptual difference between environmental assessment criteria and environmental selection criteria needs to be made (cf. Annexes 1 and 4). These are usually not the same thing. In practice the environmental assessment may act as an important source of information for the application of the selection criteria, that is, assessment data can be used to score the environmental benefits of a project, for example.

It is important to keep in mind that a selection criteria set is only one instrument to direct funding. Project selection is rarely based on mere scoring, but usually a qualitative assessment is also needed. If there is a continuous call for proposals, the significance of selection criteria tends to diminish because there is necessarily no real project pipeline to do the scoring on. Even in this case it is possible to set a minimum total score that a project needs to reach in order to be eligible for funding. It is worth noting that the determination of eligible activities has more significant implications for project selection than selection criteria. Eligible activities are chosen mainly in the programme preparation stage, but they can be further elaborated on and narrowed down in the (bi)annual regional management document (Structural Funds Act, Section 21).

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between programme objectives and eligible activities. The significance of a single selection criterion depends on the weight given to it and on the number of eligible activities and the level of detail used in the definition of these activities (see the examples in Table 3).

Table 3. The logic of project selection: the relationship between selection criteria, programme objectives and eligible measures.

Objective →	**Eligible measure** →	**Selection criteria**
• Programme general objectives • Programme horizontal objectives • Priority-level objectives	• Programme: a list of qualified project types that are thought to help achieve the objectives • Regional/intermediate authority-specific priorities (as regards eligible measures)	• A tool that helps select the measures (projects) that best support the attainment of programme- and priority-level objectives
■ E.g. 1: Stimulating enterprise	■ Energy production	■ E.g. Environmental benefits (→ great significance in guiding project selection if it is well weighted in relation to other criteria)
■ E.g. 2: Stimulating enterprise	■ Renewable energy production	■ E.g. Environmental benefits (→ the key decision has been made when determining the eligible activity. The criterion aids, however, in selecting the best environmental performer

Good selection criteria enable efficient and effective application: for this reason a criteria set needs to be easy to use (simple, not too large) and comprehensive in terms of the various programme objectives. From the perspective of applicants and partners taking part in the implementation process, it is central that the selection criteria are available for outside review. For this reason the criteria set and the scoring system, as well as its practical application, should be as transparent as possible.

2.4

Programming Period 2007–2013

Environmental assessment of project proposals

The procedure for the environmental assessment of project proposals in 2007–2013 is essentially the same as during the previous programming period. The impacts of project proposals are assessed by both the applicant and the intermediary authority. In six regions (comprising one-third of the regions) there is a special EIA panel nominated by the Regional Management Committee and consisting of the region's implementing authorities (intermediary bodies). In a couple of regions the panel was not established (e.g. Lapland, Satakunta) for this programming period. In addition, the environmental impacts of project proposals can be discussed at the secretariat of the Regional Management Committee, which handles all projects before decisions on funding are made by the individual intermediary authorities.

The environmental assessment procedure typically contains the following steps:

1) The applicant conducts a self-assessment as part of the application (an electronic checklist included in the EURA 2007 system for this purpose).
2) The intermediary authority reviews the assessment and may conduct an independent assessment.
3) Impacts are assessed and discussed in the project preparation committee of the Regional Management Committee, in an EIA panel or in another preparatory committee.
4) Impacts can be discussed in the Secretariat of the Regional Management Committee before granting permission to make a funding decision.

The procedure is comparable in all regions – steps 3 and 4 vary somewhat from region to region, however. Because EIA panels do not exist only in all of the regions and because they do not in all instances handle individual projects (due to a more coordinative function), it is apparent that the know-how of the intermediary authorities is central to the impact assessment and its quality review. In some instances the authorities have nominated their own "EIA managers" who are supposed to develop the assessment procedure in the organization and monitor the quality of the assessments. The information box on page 13 reviews the case of Southwest Finland as an example of good practice.

The role of environmental authorities (the Regional Environment Centres) in the assessment procedure varies. They do not have a statutory or otherwise established role in the impact assessment. The most common way of cooperation is informal expert advice to programme managers. Other channels for cooperation and participation include the above-mentioned EIA panels, other kinds of working groups and statements to the secretariat of the Regional Management Committee. The various project preparation committees and the secretariat of the Regional Management Committee are the main venues for participation for the environmental authority in the majority of the regions.

The results indicate that the procedure for the environmental assessment of projects is for the most part the same as during 2000–2006. The most noticeable change is that now the environmental assessment checklist (Annex 4) is standardized and will be included in the Internet-based EURA

Environmental Assessment of Projects in Southwest Finland

In structural funds programme implementation it is the responsibility of the intermediary authority to make sure that the environmental impacts of project proposals have been assessed to a sufficient degree. The key challenge is then to secure the environmental expertise of the various implementing authorities and increase their commitment to environmental assessment. As a response, EIA panels involving the suite of intermediary bodies have been formed in a number of regions. The region of Southwest Finland features a special EIA manager arrangement that can be highlighted as a best practice example.

In Southwest Finland the Regional Management Committee has authorized the Regional Environment Centre to convene an EIA panel consisting of the EIA managers nominated to each implementing authority of the area. There is representation from the Regional Council, the Employment and Economic Development Centre, the Regional Environment Centre, the State Provincial Office, the Finnish Maritime Administration and the regional department of the Finnish Road Administration.

The tasks of the nominated EIA managers are to:
- Make sure that all project applications include an adequate environmental assessment.
- Ask for further documentation on the environmental impacts of a project, if needed.
- Be aware of the applications submitted to the respective authority and their environmental assessments.
- Agree on the methods of cooperation with the managers responsible for project handling.
- Obtain the necessary expertise from outside the organization, if needed.

The tasks of the EIA panel consisting of the EIA managers are to:
- Monitor and evaluate the actual environmental impacts of projects.
- Develop the environmental assessment procedure (e.g. through giving advice and guidance).
- Assess the impacts of individual projects, if needed.
- Prepare an annual report to the Regional Management Committee on the functioning of the EIA panel and EIA managers.

The panel met three times during 2007. It did not handle individual projects. The agenda for 2007–2008 was to participate in and develop the environmental assessment of projects in the various authorities through the dissemination of information, guidance, advice and training. Standardizing the assessment practices and strengthening the role of assessment in project preparation were identified as key development needs. The panel took part in promoting SEA cooperation and capacity-building as well.

The EIA managers gave advice on environmental assessment to applicants and programme managers as needed. Ideas for developing the work included a more efficient information flow within organizations and a stronger role for the EIA managers in project preparation as early in the process as possible.

Source: Raportti Varsinais-Suomen maakunnan yhteistyöryhmälle (MYR) YVA-ryhmän toiminnasta vuonna 2007. Lounais-Suomen ympäristökeskus 6.2.2008. [In Finnish].

2007 information system (EURA was still under development in late 2008 and the checklist was not yet available online). Earlier reports have identified the lack of an EIA checklist from the application documents and their variable content as an important development need (Savola 2001, Tiihonen and Tuhkalainen 2006).

Selection criteria

The aim was to assess the project selection criteria of the ERDF programme currently in use (spring 2008) from an environmental perspective. The goal was to find out whether there are environmental selection criteria in place and if there are, what kind of criteria. Different administrative levels were examined (Monitoring Committee decisions, Regional Management Committee decisions, individual intermediary authorities). The following criteria guided the analysis:

1) Sustainable development as a cross-cutting principle of the programming process.
2) The weight of the environmental criteria in project selection.
3) The clarity and transparency of the criteria and their practical application.
4) Do the criteria encourage applicants to take environmental considerations into account?

Monitoring Committee decisions (NUTS2-level). The programme documents approved in autumn 2007 include a) eligibility criteria and b) programme-wide and priority-specific prioritisation criteria. All funded projects must fulfil the eligibility criteria (4–5 per programme) that aim to ensure that the basic conditions for funding exist (e.g. relevance to programme objectives). The programme-wide prioritisation criteria are the same in all four programmes (each containing 12), whereas there's considerable variation in the priority-specific criteria (5–10 per priority axis).

The Monitoring Committees have approved the selection criteria in late 2007 and early 2008. The selection criteria listed in the programme documents have been partly revised and elaborated upon in the decisions. The eligibility criteria are essentially the same as in the programme documents. Sustainable development is in all cases one of the eligibility criteria. Similarly, there are no changes in the programme-wide prioritisation criteria. They do not contain any environmental criteria.

Southern and Western Finland have adopted additional criteria based on the programme cross-cutting principles. Both programmes feature sustainable development as one of the four principles guiding all programme preparation and implementation work. The decisions of the Monitoring Committees state that projects fulfilling these principles are favoured in the selection process. These principles have been presented separate from other selection criteria, however, and their position and relationship to the other criteria (e.g. in scoring) remains unclear on the basis of the documentation available.

Priority-wise the adopted selection criteria include some environmentally-oriented criteria. There are differences between programmes, however. Especially the criteria set adopted by the Southern Finland Monitoring Committee is structurally different from the other programmes. It comprises six main criteria common to all priority axes. One of these six criteria is "environmental impacts". The environmental criterion has at least, in principle, the same weight as the other four criteria.

Other programmes have priority-specific criteria. There are 0–3 criteria with a clear environmental component per priority axis (Table 4). The weight of the environmental criteria is much lower than in the model adopted by Southern Finland. Further, their scope of application is often much narrower than that of "environmental impacts". Eastern and Northern Finland include only very few or no environmental criteria (Table 4).

In practice it is often difficult to draw the line between what is an environmental criterion and what is not. Here only those criteria with a clear environmental orientation were interpreted as environmental criteria. Thus, "sustainable development" was interpreted narrowly and classified as an environmental criterion, where as "creating opportunities for businesses to be established in the area" and "improving the attractiveness and accessibility of the area", for example, were not. Eastern Finland priority axis 1 and 2 criterion "contributes to programme horizontal themes" has such a wide

Table 4. The number of environmental criteria (no/all criteria) and weight in the criteria sets adopted by the monitoring committees. Programme-wide (PW) and priority-specific (PA) criteria have been presented separately.

Programme	PW	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4-(-5)	Weight[1]
Southern Finland	–	1/6	1/6	1/6	1/6	17 %
Western Finland	0/12	1/10	2/12	3/8	0/10	7 %
Eastern Finland	0/12	0/9	0/7	1/5	–	2 %
Northern Finland	0/12	0/8	0/11	0/5	–	0 %

[1]Average weight. E.g. Western Finland: PA1 (0/12 + 1/10) + PA2 + … /4 = 7 %.

range of application that it was not considered to be an environmental criterion. The analysis was complicated by the fact that the content and practical application of the criteria were usually not defined.

Table 4 presents the number of environmental criteria and their indicative weight in each programme. The weights presented are mean values for the priority axes and do not necessarily give a correct picture of real-life application. They do, however, provide a rather objective view on how the environment has been taken into account in project selection criteria. Excluding Southern Finland, the mean weight of environmental criteria is less than 10 %. In project scoring a large number (12) of programme-wide selection criteria is also applied.

Regional (NUTS3) and organization-specific criteria.

The Regional Management Committees have usually not decided on additional criteria in the (bi) annual regional cooperation document (the latest document from each region was examined). Regional selection criteria have been adopted in only three regions (Lapland, Central Finland, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region). In Lapland, there are three environmental criteria in priority axis 1 and six in priority axis 3. Both axes have a total of 20 criteria that account for one-third of the possible score. The rest of the score comes from other regional and qualitative appraisal. It is evident that the weight of the environmental criteria is small. Central Finland has 18 selection criteria including one on "effectiveness in relation to the environment and sustainable development". Helsinki-Uusimaa Region has further developed the criteria set approved by the Monitoring Committee.

In accordance with the Structural Funds Act, the regional cooperation documents have defined special priority activities in the programme implementation. Regional priorities are indeed an eligibility criterion in all programmes, which makes it clear that they have a strong role in directing financing. On the basis of available documentation, it was, however, difficult to interpret the role and weight of the regional priorities in project scoring.

The results of a questionnaire directed to the Regional Environment Centres suggest that there are intermediary authorities who seldom have criteria of their own. The answers can be divided into two categories, however. The one group of answers said that the various intermediary authorities have (or may have) their own selection criteria, whereas the other group answered that there are no such criteria in use. Due to the general nature of the available documentation, it was hard for an outsider to gain a clear picture of what criteria are actually used and are regional priorities (these are often listed authority-wise) applied as scoring criteria (or is it just a matter of determining eligible activities). Excluding environmental authorities, it is probable that other authorities only rarely employ environmental criteria. Sustainable development was often mentioned as a criterion or principle, but it

remained unclear if it is used as a scoring criterion. The analysis involves a considerable degree of uncertainty, however.

Conclusions

In the existing criteria sets, sustainable development as a cross-cutting principle has been taken into account to a varying degree. Two main problems can be identified: 1) integration of the environment into the scoring (prioritisation) criteria and 2) the weight of the environmental criteria in relation to other scoring criteria.

Sustainable development is an eligibility criterion in all the programmes, which supports attaining the goal of sustainability in programme implementation. There is usually no definition of sustainable development included, however. Individual shortcomings include the absence of environmental criteria from the programme-wide scoring criteria (3 programmes) as well as from priority axes 1 and 2 (two programmes). The criteria set adopted by the Southern Finland Monitoring Committee performs well in most respects and can be considered a good practice example.

It is unclear how the selection criteria are applied in practice as there is usually no documentation on the practical application of the criteria. With the exception of Southern Finland, the other programme areas have apparently not agreed on common principles for project scoring.

As a whole, the selection criteria of Western, Eastern and Northern Finland cannot be considered to be clear and transparent enough. As such, they are unable to encourage applicants to take the environment and sustainable development into account.

Feedback received during the preparation of this report indicate that the selection criteria included in the EURA 2007 management and monitoring system are not in line with the Monitoring Committee decisions.

3 Monitoring

3.1

Monitoring Basics

This section outlines the basic principles for organising environmental monitoring in the context of structural funds programmes, discusses available indicator types, and analyses the monitoring measures proposed in the programme documents for 2007–2013. A framework for SEA monitoring for the current programming period is presented in Section 6.2. A specific goal of this section is to describe:

- What impacts the monitoring should cover.
- What kinds of indicators can be used.
- Is monitoring data readily available or is it necessary to collect new data.
- How and when the monitoring data should be produced, collected, reported, analysed and utilised in decision-making.

The environmental impacts of operational programmes can be divided into intended impacts and side-effects (Figure 1). Environmental monitoring can be geared to various purposes (Paldanius and Tallskog 2003): to acquire data on goal-attainment (performance-oriented monitoring) or to measure the anticipated and unanticipated side-effects of a programme, or its impacts in relation to policy goals.

The monitoring of structural funds programmes is usually set to provide information on their performance (European Commission 2006). In Finland, the environmental monitoring of the programmes carried out in 2000–2006 was performance-oriented in nature. Thus, monitoring sought to answer how well the environmental goals of the programmes were being reached by quantifying the number of environmental projects and their share of the total assistance granted (Berninger 1999).

Intervention (programme or project)	Other policies and factors
Intended impacts (+)	Intended impacts (+)
Side-effects (+/-)	Side-effects (+/-)

Figure 1. Intended impacts and side-effects of programmes in the context of other policies and factors driving the development of a region (Berninger 1999, European Commission 2006).

The introduction of the SEA Act has had important implications for the environmental monitoring of structural funds interventions. The Act provides that the significant environmental effects of programmes need to be monitored in such a way as to enable responsible authorities to take corrective action if adverse impacts occur. In practical terms this means that also the negative environmental impacts of programme implementation need to be monitored, which in turn makes a performance-oriented approach insufficient.

According to the SEA Act, the envisaged monitoring measures should be drafted during programme preparation as part of the strategic environmental assessment. A recent survey of, inter alia, the Finnish ERDF programmes showed that there were significant shortcomings with the proposed monitoring systems (Kallio 2008). The proposed monitoring measures are discussed in detail in Section 3.4.

The General Provisions Regulation on Structural Funds (1083/2006/EC) provides that the implementation of programmes be monitored with the help of indicators (Art. 64–65, Art. 37). The relationship between monitoring required by the Regulation and that provided for in national and Community SEA legislation is left open, however. The coordination of the monitoring requirements is the responsibility of competent national authorities (European Commission 2006). The guidelines on structural funds monitoring and evaluation recommend, however, that the monitoring of horizontal principles be integrated into the overall indicator system of programmes (European Commission 2006).

3.2

Establishing Monitoring

To set up a coherent and functional monitoring system, it is essential to take decisions on the specific objective of monitoring, the impacts to be monitored, the indicators to be used, the practical organization of data collection, reporting and utilisation (Table 5).

Determining the impacts and indicators is best done during programme preparation, while data collection, analysis and utilisation are the tasks of the implementation phase. From the perspective of a well-functioning and transparent monitoring system, it is crucial that the details of monitoring responsibilities and other practicalities be decided on already before the adoption of a programme.

Table 5 outlines the key steps in establishing a monitoring system (see also Annex 2). Determining the purpose of monitoring helps in designing efficient monitoring. The most important step is to identify the impacts to be monitored and the indicators to be used. At this stage the scope of monitoring can be narrowed down to those impacts considered the most significant. Representative indicators are then selected. The selection of indicators is dealt with in more detail in Section 3.3. Selection of indicators is followed by an examination of available monitoring data and the need to collect new information. It is also important to agree on the details of data collection. Finally, decisions should be taken on the publication of the monitoring results and how they are made use of in decision-making.

Table 5. The key steps in establishing a monitoring system. Annex 2 contains a more detailed table with examples.

Step	Determine
1. The objective of monitoring	• The goal and purpose of monitoring
2. Impacts to be monitored	• What impacts should be monitored • Any other parameters to be monitored (e.g. mitigation measures, programme environmental objectives)
3. Methods and indicators	• What indicators are used to measure the impacts • Any other methods
4. Organization and data collection	• Available sources of monitoring data • Who collects and processes the monitoring data • At what point and how will data be collected
5. Reporting monitoring results and data utilisation	• The media and interval of reporting • At what stage and how will the data be analysed and made use of in decision-making

3.3

SEA Monitoring

SEA monitoring basics

The SEA Act (Section 12) provides that the significant environmental impacts of authorities' plans and programmes are monitored in such a way as to allow for remedial action to prevent and mitigate environmental harm. Monitoring under the SEA Act should seek to answer whether or not such significant impacts occur. The key idea is to test the predictions of the environmental assessment and its conclusions empirically (European Commission 2004) and to allow for decision-makers to take action if monitoring data give evidence of adverse impacts.

Besides this basic requirement to monitor significant environmental impacts, the SEA Act lays down few additional provisions on monitoring. The provisions of the Act require that devising a monitoring system should be done during programme preparation. According to the Finnish SEA legislation, the intended monitoring measures have to be described: a) in the programme document or in a decision adopting the programme (SEA Act, Section 11) and b) in the environmental report (SEA Decree 347/2005, Section 4). The responsibility for monitoring lies with the authority responsible for the programme (SEA Act, Section 12).

The detailed design and implementation of monitoring is left to the discretion of the responsible authority (e.g. number of impacts to be monitored, methods, reporting, utilisation of the results). This leaves ample room to take into account the characteristics of a programme and the nature of its expected impacts (see Barth and Fuder 2002).

Content and methodology of monitoring

As it may not be realistic to monitor all the impacts of a programme, it is often acceptable to narrow down monitoring to the most significant of them (European Commission 2004). Any delineation of the impacts to be monitored should be well reasoned, however. The most useful and relevant starting point is the strategic environmental assessment and its results. The analysis of the environmental baseline (of the region) and key environmental policy goals can be relevant tools as well.

SEA legislation sets no specific requirements for the monitoring methodology (see Barth and Fuder 2002). In the absence of a specific requirement, it would be sound to apply the best available technique. Basically, the suitability of a given method is determined by its ability to provide information on the impacts of interest and whether or not it can be used to verify the predictions made in the environmental report.

Monitoring can be either direct or indirect in nature. Unlike direct monitoring, the indirect approach focuses not on individual impacts, but rather on pressure factors causing the impacts. It is also possible to monitor any measures intended to prevent and mitigate adverse environmental impacts (Barth and Fuder 2002, European Commission 2004). Depending on the programme type, monitoring data can be quantitative or qualitative. In practice, most environmental monitoring systems are based on the use of indicators (European Commission 2004). The following parameters are available (Persson and Nilsson 2007):

- Identified significant environmental impacts.
- Unforeseen significant environmental impacts.
- Attainment of environmental objectives.
- Mitigation measures.
- Environmental baseline.

SEA monitoring can be part of an existing monitoring system and the regular revision of a plan or programme (European Commission 2004). In other words, monitoring can make use of available monitoring data (if relevant) and it can be coupled with the overall programme implementation process or cycle.

The SEA Act does not contain any provision on reporting or utilising the monitoring results. That monitoring should enable remedial action, implies, however, that there is a need to analyse the results and take them into account in decision-making (Barth and Fuder 2002).

Structural funds programmes

In this sub-section establishing environmental monitoring in the context of structural funds programmes is discussed. Available indicator types will be discussed in the next section.

The starting point for defining *the goal and purpose* of environmental monitoring is the SEA Act , Section 12, as described above. Monitoring should take place on the programme-level and thus cover all priority axes and financed projects. In some cases it might, however, make sense to confine monitoring to only those parts of a programme that are predicted to have the most significant impacts (Barth and Fuder 2002).

Monitoring need not cover all possible impacts. *The selection of impacts* to be monitored should be based on the environmental assessment and its results. Especially, monitoring should include those positive and negative impacts that have been assessed to be (possibly) significant. The obligation to carry out monitoring applies even if no significant effects on the environment were identified in the assessment.

The description of the environmental baseline and relevant environmental policies can be useful when determining the content of monitoring. The central environmental problems of a region and policies set at various levels (as described in the environmental report) can help direct the monitoring effort and increase its relevance. In addition to environmental impacts, the monitoring may concern mitigation measures (such as environmental assessment of project proposals, environmental selection criteria).

The collection of monitoring data can be either continuous or take place after a certain period of time has lapsed (e.g. at the mid-point of the programming period). If available monitoring data do not exist, the information produced in the environmental assessment of projects is a possible source of indicator data (Handbook on SEA… 2006, page 30). In certain cases monitoring the actual impacts during a project's life-span can be justified (e.g. if actual emissions or energy production quantities are to be followed), but from the point of view of effective monitoring data utilisation it is essential to acquire data already during the programming period so that adjustments to programme implementation can be made.

The authority responsible for the programme is also responsible for collecting the monitoring data.

If data collection is based on the information produced in the environmental assessment of project proposals, all bodies making funding decisions and assessments take part in producing the monitoring data. The data should be fed into any existing information system allowing flexible data analysis and reporting.

Reporting and utilisation of monitoring data. The interval of reporting depends in part on the methodology used. If monitoring is based on readily updatable indicators, the trends can be reported in the annual monitoring reports. A closer analysis and utilisation of monitoring data can be done as part of the programme evaluations and when making adjustments to programme implementation.

3.4 Environmental Indicators

Monitoring data: indicators

Monitoring indicators are commonly used in the monitoring of operational programmes to measure their impacts and performance. The selection of indicators is a critical step when establishing a monitoring system, because the character of the chosen indicators has immediate implications for the quality and usability of the monitoring data.

There are great differences between available indicator types (Table 6) in terms of their preferred use and availability. Therefore, it is essential to identify what kinds of indicators serve best the intended purpose of monitoring. The following classification of indicators is based on relevant guidance documents (European Commission 1998, 2006; Barth and Fuder 2002).

Baseline indicators (i.e. context or macro indicators) are used to describe the socio-economic or environmental state of a region. Essentially, they produce background information on the development trends of a region, which is affected by many factors besides a given intervention (European Commission 2006). Programme indicators, on the other hand, relate to the impacts of a programme. They can be further divided into *financial, performance and impact indicators* (Table 6). Financial indicators measure the amount of assistance allocated to different kinds of projects, for example. Performance indicators measure the concrete results achieved. Impact indicators measure the net impact of a programme in relation to baseline indicators (e.g. state of the environment). Environmental indicator refers to any type of the above indicators.

In the selection of indicators careful attention must be paid to their relevance, usability and reliability. It is critical to define what impacts the chosen indicators are meant to reflect (especially important when using indirect indicators) and how the indicator data will be collected. The availability of indicators and the added value they bring to decision-making are further considerations. Readiness to process, analyse and utilise the collected data should be thought out as well. Individual indicators need to fulfil, inter alia, the following criteria (see European Commission 1998, 2006):

- They should be representative.
- Simple and easily interpreted.
- Sensitive to changes in the implementation of a programme.
- Based on readily available data or be available at a reasonable cost.
- Based on data adequately documented and of known quality.

Table 6. Available indicator types.

Programme indicators	Answers…	Example
Baseline indicator	The environmental baseline and its development	The trend in the CO_2 emissions of a region
Financial indicator (input indicator)	Proportion of assistance to different kinds of projects or to projects with different impacts	Financed renewable or non-renewable energy projects (number) or percentage of assistance (%)
Performance indicator (output or result indicator)	Concrete results achieved	Achieved increase in renewable or non-renewable energy production (MW)
Impact indicator	An environmental impact of a programme	Achieved reduction or caused increase in emissions (tonnes)

- Capable of being updated at regular intervals.
- Have a baseline and a target value.
- Show trends over time.

Analysis and utilisation of monitoring data

Monitoring provides data that can be utilised in decision-making in the programme implementation process and in the preparation of subsequent programming periods. Because mere data collection brings little added value to programme processes, it is crucial to analyse and make use of the data. Taking full advantage of monitoring data calls for interpreting and drawing conclusions about it. The SEA Directive, for example, indirectly entails analysing the monitoring data by implying that monitoring should enable remedial action to be taken (Barth and Fuder 2002). It needs to be noted, however, that existing SEA legislation does not necessitate a separate study to monitor the impacts (European Commission 2004).

A basic premise of this report is that monitoring is a process comprising not just data collection, but it also includes analysing the data for decision-making purposes. An independent programme evaluation can be seen as being a part of the monitoring process (on the relationship between monitoring and evaluation, see Section 5.1) (Paldanius and Tallskog 2003; Persson and Nilsson 2007).

Structural funds programmes

The relevance of the introduced indicator types to the environmental monitoring of the Finnish ERDF programmes is analysed below. The analysis criteria are acceptability vis-à-vis the SEA Act, practical feasibility and added value to programme implementation.

In general, baseline indicators alone do not to satisfy the purpose of environmental monitoring of ERDF programmes because they are rarely sensitive to the impacts of a programme. Using relevant baseline indicators can be well-founded, however, as they provide useful background information for the monitoring and implementation process (see European Commission 2006). Monitoring based solely on baseline indicators does not meet the minimum requirements of the SEA Act. The feasibility of a baseline indicator approach depends on the availability of relevant indicators (existence of national and regional baseline statistics).

Financial indicators make it possible to acquire information on the pressure factors caused. By looking at what kind of projects have been funded, indirect information on the positive and negative impacts of the programme is produced. An indicator can be, for example, the proportion of assistance granted to climate positive, neutral or negative projects. While such monitoring will not yield information on the actual impacts on the environment, it is, however, able to capture the positive and negative financial inputs likely to produce such impacts and thus provides indicative information on the programme's impacts. By enabling the monitoring of both positive and negative impacts, the indicator type is in line with the objective of SEA monitoring.

The benefit of this indicator type is that the necessary data can be produced in an existing procedure (the environmental assessment of project proposals). The challenge is the subjectivity of the data and possible quality problems (see Savola 2001; Seppälä 2003; Tiihonen and Tuhkalainen 2006). As the environmental assessment data would, at the same time, be monitoring data, the use of this indicator type would require measures to coordinate the assessment practices and ensure the quality of the data. The responsibility for producing the data rests with the implementing bodies –self-assessment by the applicant cannot be used for this purpose. Environmental authorities should have a role in the quality review of the produced data.

Performance indicators measure the concrete achievements of programme implementation. Possible indicators include the amount of renewable energy produced (MW), the number of cultural environments renovated, or the number of environmental management systems adopted, and so on. The problem with performance indicators is that the attainment of programme objectives does not usually tell very much about possible harmful side-effects. On the other hand, an increase in the amount of renewable energy produced, for example, gives concrete information on a programme's positive environmental contribution and its significance, because it is possible to compare these figures to the overall energy production rates of a region. Performance indicators do not alone, however, enable comprehensive SEA monitoring, but can bring added value to an indicator system and to programme implementation.

Impact indicators measure a programme's direct environmental impacts. Possible indicators include caused GHG emissions (tonnes) or caused changes in land use (hectares). Of different kinds of pressure factors, the increase in traffic volumes or amount of waste produced can be likened to direct impacts for the purposes of this report. At least in the case of Finland, it is very difficult to apply

impact indicators to the monitoring of structural funds programmes because: 1) large-scale projects with directly measurable environmental impacts are usually not financed, and 2) in the case of small projects establishing project-specific monitoring systems is usually not reasonable.

3.5

Programming Period 2007–2013

The programming documents and their environmental reports contain a very short description of the intended monitoring measures (see Kallio 2008). In the programming documents relevant indicators are 1) the proportion of assistance given to environmentally beneficial projects 2) fossil CO_2 emissions from industry and energy production, and 3) the proportion of assistance given to projects that aim to reduce GHG emissions. From the viewpoint of the SEA Act, the problem with the proposed indicators is that their connection to the environmental assessments is weak, and that their scope is rather limited and performance-oriented.

The envisaged monitoring does not meet the requirements of the SEA Act, because it is not able to catch the possible negative impacts of the programmes and thus does not even theoretically enable authorities to take remedial action if necessary. Annex 3 contains a detailed analysis of the shortcomings of the monitoring systems as they were presented in the programming documents and environmental reports.

By and large, organizing environmental monitoring as defined in the SEA Act seemed incomplete and commitment to it poor. The documents failed to identify the impacts to be monitored and the indicators to be used.

4 Reporting

4.1

Sustainable Development and Environmental Assessment Procedures

In structural funds programming the framework for reporting is set by the annual implementation reports. Their preparation is based on the General Provisions Regulation on Structural Funds (1083/2006/EC, Art. 67), which provides that the managing authority (in Finland the Ministry of Employment and the Economy) shall submit an annual report on the implementation of the programmes to the Commission. In Finland the region coordinating a programme is in practice responsible for preparing the report. In the implementation reports information is given on the progress made in the implementation of the programmes (how objectives are being achieved, the allocation of funding etc.) and on the management and monitoring of programmes.

From the point of view of the environment and programme implementation, key items to be reported are

- How the cross-cutting goal of sustainable development has been attained.
- The procedures (both those enhancing environmental benefits and those preventing adverse effects) applied in project selection (e.g. environmental assessment procedures).
- Information on the monitoring data, i.e. indicator and other relevant data.

During the programming period 2000–2006 the annual reports included a section on sustainable development that consisted of authorities' accounts on how the financed projects have worked towards achieving the objective of sustainable development. The various environmental assessment practices were documented in the same section.

4.2

Indicator Data

The SEA Act does not contain provisions on reporting of the indicator data. Neither does the Act require annual monitoring. It is good practice, however, to report monitoring data as efficiently and transparently as possible. In autumn 2008, the Commission sent a letter to the Member States where it encouraged to include SEA monitoring measures or indicators in the annual implementation reports (European Commission 2008).

It is possible to document monitoring data in the annual implementation reports as part of the overall monitoring system of the programme. If monitoring data is easily available, it is worth reporting it on an annual basis. Another option is to report and analyse the monitoring data at the mid-point of the programming period, for example.

4.3

Programming Period 2007–2013

As before, the progress made on sustainable development, environmental assessment procedures and environmental indicator data are reported in the annual implementation reports in 2007–2013. The Ministry of the Environment has drafted a recommendation (spring 2008) to include information on sustainable development as part of the implementation reports. The recommendation suggests that reporting should follow the themes outlined in the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. In addition, annual reporting of environmental indicators is suggested. Likewise, the existing environmental assessment procedures should be reported at the beginning of the programming period.

5 Evaluation

5.1

Evaluation Objectives and Relationship to Monitoring

Structural funds legislation requires the evaluation of interventions alongside programme preparation (ex ante), during the programming period (interim) and after the programming period (ex post). Evaluation of the programmes is based on the General Provisions Regulation (1083/2006/EC), Articles 47–49, which provide that the Member States are responsible for the evaluations during programme preparation and implementation, whereas the Commission takes care of the ex post evaluation. Independent evaluators are contracted to carry out the evaluations.

The general purpose of evaluations is to contribute to the quality and efficiency of structural funds programming. The aim is to produce information on how the programmes and the specific measures taken have helped in achieving the programme-level objectives and, on the other hand, to provide a critical analysis of the programme strategy and objectives in relation to the development needs and goals of a region. With the help of evaluations, it is then possible to gain information on the efficiency and effectiveness of the measures taken (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2008). From an environmental perspective, the task of evaluations is to analyse how the programmes have contributed to sustainable development.

It is of key importance to define the relationship between evaluations and monitoring. As mentioned above, SEA monitoring does not as such require carrying out a separate study (an evaluation is clearly a separate study). This report, however, takes the stance that monitoring (collection of data) and evaluation (analysis of data) should not be regarded as separate entities but rather as parts of a comprehensive monitoring process. Thus, evaluation would bring significant added value to SEA monitoring (see Paldanius and Tallskog 2003; Persson and Nilsson 2007). When defining the relationship between evaluations and monitoring, Article 47(1) of the General Regulation should be taken into account:

> *Evaluations shall aim to …while taking account of the objective of sustainable development and of the relevant Community legislation concerning environmental impact and strategic environmental assessment.*

Overall, it can be held that the significance of evaluation is pronounced in the context of operational programmes where monitoring indicators are capable of producing only indirect information on their impacts. The benefit of evaluations is that they are able to provide a deeper view of the actual positive and negative environmental impacts of a programme, including an analysis of the significance of the impacts, than mere indicator data collection would allow. Further, evaluations can review the quality of the monitoring data (if collected separately) and assess the functionality of possible mitigation measures (e.g. selection criteria, environmental assessment procedures). The added value of evaluations is therefore significant from an environmental perspective as well.

5.2

Programming Period 2007–2013

The Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy has prepared the guidelines for evaluations for the programming period 2007–2013 (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2008). According to the guidelines, a general plan for evaluations in 2007–2013 will be prepared in 2008, and later, more specific short-term action plans will be prepared. The general plan provides a thematic framework and an indicative timetable for the evaluations.

In the programming period 2007–2013 Member States are not required to carry out an interim evaluation of each programme. Instead, it is possible to focus the evaluations on specific themes. According to the aforementioned evaluation guidelines, thematic evaluations will play a central role during the new programming period. They can be targeted at either individual priority axes (or special themes within them) or at programme horizontal themes (e.g. sustainable development). The evaluations will be carried out jointly for all the programmes (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2008).

The evaluation plan is currently in preparation (October 2008). It has been possible to take into account the proposals made in Section 6.3 of this report. The plan states that environmental impacts and sustainable development are key principles in the evaluation process (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2008b). According to the evaluation action plan for 2007–2010 "environmental impacts and sustainable development" is one of the four evaluation themes (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2008b).

6 Proposals for Better Environmental Integration

6.1

Project Selection

Environmental Assessment of Project Proposals

The study aimed to provide a general review of existing procedures for assessing the environmental impacts of project proposals during 2007–2013. As this was not a detailed analysis, only general guidelines for further development are outlined. The findings indicate that the points to work on are largely the same as during the previous programming period (Savola 2001):

- Enhancing competent authorities' commitment to environmental assessment and procedures agreed upon.
- Ensuring the expertise of programme managers through guidance, training and sharing of experiences.
- Increasing the effectiveness of environmental assessment in project preparation; for example, through setting environmental conditions on assistance.

Especially those regions that currently do not have a preparatory committee or an EIA panel should pay attention to cooperation between the various authorities especially when dealing with difficult cases. Interaction at the end of the process (e.g. at the secretariat of the Regional Management Committee) takes place too late if the purpose is to integrate environmental goals into projects.

The feedback received during the preparation of this report indicates that there is a need to develop national guidance to support the environmental assessment of projects.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria should be developed in a way that secures 1) the consideration of the environment across all priority axes in compliance with the integration principle and 2) adequate weight for environmental criteria in project scoring.

The main alternatives are:

Alternative 1: Follow the model adopted in Southern Finland (see above and Annex 1). Define a limited set of main criteria and have the environment included on a par with the other criteria. The main criteria score points based on predefined subcriteria. Rationale: easily grasped, transparency. Action required: a major overhaul of the selection criteria of Western, Eastern and Northern Finland.

Alternative 2: Develop the existing criteria sets. Include an environmental criterion in the set of programme-wide project selection criteria. Include a general environmental criterion (may be supported by additional, more specific environmental criteria if desirable) in each priority- specific criteria set. Determine the scope of environmental criteria by adopting guidance on how to score the criteria in different types of projects.

Based on the identified alternatives, the following proposals for action are made. Southern Finland is exempted.

Proposal 1: sustainable development

Define compliance with sustainable development. What criteria does a project have to meet in order to be considered in line with sustainable development?

Proposal 2: the set of programme-wide project selection criteria

It is suggested that the criterion "positive climate and environmental impacts" is added to this set of criteria. The rationale is that it would emphasise and draw attention to the fact that the environment in general and the climate in particular are important considerations in the implementation of the programmes and in project selection.

Proposal 3: priority-specific criteria sets

Every priority axis should contain the criterion "environmental benefits" or "environmental impacts". Western Finland should define the scope of the criterion "supports sustainable development" (currently in use) or adopt an explicit environmental criterion.

Proposal 4: definition of criteria and guidance on practical application

Define "environmental benefits" for each priority axis, e.g. through adopting guidance on how to score these criteria. A model for scoring the proposed criteria is given in Annex 5.

Proposal 5: draw applicants' attention to environmental criteria

The existence of environmental criteria and the possibility to score on them should be brought to the attention of potential applicants as efficiently as possible.

Proposal 6: updating the EURA 2007 information system

The selection criteria in the system should be updated to match the criteria approved by the Monitoring Committees.

6.2

Monitoring

The environmental monitoring systems of the ERDF programmes need to be developed so that they fulfil the minimum requirements laid down in the SEA Act.

Based on existing guidance and the latest research articles on SEA monitoring, a number of alternative models for SEA monitoring were examined in the course of this work. The alternatives were in practice the different types of environmental indicators available and their suitability to SEA monitoring in the context of structural funds programming.

For the remainder of the ongoing programming period, only one model is proposed. It is compatible with existing procedures and can with little effort be integrated into the information system (EURA 2007) currently in use. The rationale for the proposed model is that it

- Is in line with the basic requirements of the SEA Act (gives information on possible adverse impacts and provides for remedial action in the face of undesired development).
- Is realistic at this stage of the programming period and brings added value to the programme implementation process.

Proposal 1: impacts to be monitored

The objects to be monitored are the themes (7) and impacts (25) listed in the environmental assessment checklist of the EURA 2007 information system (Annex 4). While it is admitted that the scope of monitoring should not be too wide, confining monitoring to only certain impacts is not proposed at his point because the environmental reports of the programmes proved unhelpful in making such a selection.

Proposal 2: indicators

An approach based on financial indicators is proposed. The indicators are the percentages of assistance given to projects with 1) negative, 2) neutral or 3) positive climate impacts, for example.

Indicator data are produced in the environmental assessment of projects. The assessment is conducted jointly by the applicant and the body making the decision to finance a project.

The proposed indicator system is compatible with the environmental indicators listed in the programming documents (percentage of funding granted to environmentally beneficial projects, the fossil CO_2 emissions of industry and energy production, the percentage of funding granted to projects with positive GHG impacts). The CO_2 indicator will be acquired from Statistics Finland.

Proposal 3: information systems

Monitoring will take advantage of existing information systems (EURA 2007 and TUKI2000). A section for the authorities' environmental assessment needs to be added to the EURA 2007 system.

The EURA 2007 system needs to be developed in such a way as to allow indicator searches from the database as needed.

Proposal 4: reporting the monitoring data

The assessment (indicator) data collected should be reported in the annual programme implementation reports.

Proposal 5: analysing and making use of the collected monitoring data

The monitoring (indicator) data collected should be analysed and its quality reviewed as part of a thematic environmental evaluation of the programmes.

6.3

Reporting

It is proposed that the following items are included in the annual implementation reports:

- Programme implementation results from the point of view of the environment – progress made towards sustainable development.
- Information on the SEA indicators mentioned in the programming documents.
- The SEA indicator data gathered after the monitoring proposals of this report have been implemented.
- In the first or second annual report, the environmental assessment procedures in use in the programme area.

6.4

Evaluation

Evaluations during the programming period must pay attention to the environmental impacts of the programmes and to the principle of sustainable development in compliance with Article 47 of the General Provisions Regulation on Structural Funds (1083/2006/EC).

Proposal 1: thematic environmental evaluation

A thematic joint environmental evaluation of the programmes is proposed. The evaluation should cover both the attainment of environmental objectives and the environmental impacts of the programmes.

Rationale: An evaluation with an environmental perspective provides a critical analysis of how the environmental goals of the programmes are being achieved and what the impacts have been. It contributes to the effectiveness of programme implementation and therefore brings added value to the programme decision-making process.

The thematic environmental evaluation should cover:

- Sustainable development as a programme horizontal principle – progress made across the priority axes. Special focus on climate-related objectives.
- The effectiveness of existing preventive and mitigation measures such as the environmental assessment of project proposals and the environmental project selection criteria.
- The positive and negative environmental impacts of the programmes – quantitative and qualitative analysis of collected SEA monitoring data, including the quality of indicator data and the significance of environmental impacts.

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Annex 1

Environmental Selection Criteria of the 2007–2013 ERDF Programmes

Programme	Environmental selection criteria[1)]
Southern Finland	**1. Eligibility criteria** • *Compliance with sustainable development* **2. Main criteria** • *Environmental impacts* one of six main criteria • Main criteria apply to all priority axes • Broken into three subcriteria: a) promoting environmental know-how and environmental management impacts on consumption, production, production and use of energy, emissions, transport and com b) bating climate change c) welfare factors of society and the environment • Subcriteria give 0–5 points each – total score is their average • Guidance given on scoring **3. Cross-cutting principles** • Preference is given to projects that comply with the programme cross-cutting principles • The cross-cutting principles are: a) promotion of equality b) promotion of sustainable development c) promotion of cooperation and partnership d) promotion of the information society
Western Finland	**1. Eligibility criteria** • *Compliance with sustainable development* **2. Programme-wide selection criteria** • Do not contain environmental criteria **3. Priority-specific selection criteria** • Priority axis 1: fostering sustainable development • Priority axis 2: creating opportunities to use renewable energy sources; supporting sustainable development • Priority axis 3: contributing to sustainable development and the controlled use of natural resources; improving the quality of the living environment; improving environmental risk management • Priority axis 4: no environmental criteria **4. Cross-cutting principles** • Preference is given to projects that comply with the programme cross-cutting principles • The cross-cutting principles are: a) promotion of cooperation and partnership b) improvement of the competitiveness of the operating environment c) promotion of equality d) promotion of sustainable development

ANNEX 1/2

Programme	Environmental selection criteria[1)]
Eastern Finland	**1. Eligibility criteria** • *Compliance with sustainable development* **2. Programme-wide selection criteria** • Do not contain environmental criteria **3. Priority-specific selection criteria** • Priority axis 1: supports programme horizontal principles • Priority axis 2: supports programme horizontal principles • Priority axis 3: improves the quality of the living environment
Northern Finland	**1. Eligibility criteria** • *Compliance with sustainable development* **2. Programme-wide selection criteria** • Do not contain environmental criteria **3. Priority-specific selection criteria** • Priority axis 1: no environmental criteria • Priority axis 2: no environmental criteria • Priority axis 3: no environmental criteria

[1)] As approved by the programme Monitoring Committees.

Annex 2

Setting up SEA Monitoring

Step	Task	SEA legislation[1)]	Example
1) The objective of monitoring	Determine the role of monitoring in programme implementation	Monitor the significant environmental effects of programmes	Conduct a quality review of the environmental assessment; verify empirically the predictions of the SEA
2) The impacts to be monitored	Select the impacts to be monitored and any other parameters to be monitored	Base the selection of impacts on the results of the strategic environmental assessment	Base monitoring on the key findings of the SEA
3) Monitoring methods and indicators	Choose a proper method and indicators to monitor the selected impacts	- A separate study not necessary	Choose indicators that best reflect the impacts of interest and bring added value to programme implementation. Use baseline indicators to complement the indicator system. If necessary, monitor the effectiveness of mitigation measures
4) The practical organization of monitoring and data collection	Decide when and who collects the monitoring data. Find out if there is relevant monitoring data available. Find out if it is possible to take advantage of existing information systems to collect the data	Authority responsible for the programme takes care of monitoring. Existing data can be used	Collect monitoring data from project applications. Feed data into an existing information system
5) Reporting and utilising monitoring data	Decide when and how the monitoring data will be reported and how it will be used in the programme implementation process and when preparing the next programming period	- Monitoring should enable taking remedial action (needs to be considered in decision-making)	Report the indicator data as part of the overall programme indicator system. Evaluate the results. Provide decision-makers with a summary of the results and suggest measures for action, if necessary

[1)] Notes based on Finnish SEA legislation and the Commission guidance on implementing the SEA Directive (European Commission 2004).

Annex 3

Analysis of Proposed Monitoring Measures

An analysis of the monitoring measures presented in the environmental reports and programming documents of the Finnish ERDF programmes. The criteria have been developed with help of guidance on the implementation of Article 10 of the SEA Directive (especially European Commission 2004, Annex 1).

Criterion	**Treatment**
1) Impacts to be monitored • Impacts to be monitored? • Any delineation made? Reasons given?	 • (= not treated) •
2) Monitoring methods and indicators • Treatment of methods chosen? • Any indicators? Other objects of interest?	 • • Not treated, or reference to the indicators listed in the programme document
3) Practical organization of monitoring and data collection • The practical organization of monitoring? Cooperation in data collection? • Analysis of existing indicator data sources? • Need to collect new data? • Links to any existing monitoring system, including programme socio-economic monitoring?	 • • Not treated, or monitoring will be based on available baseline indicators • •
4) Reporting and utilisation of monitoring data • Timing and tools for reporting and data analysis? • Relationship to programme evaluations? • Any definition of possible remedial action? • Any thresholds for remedial action? • Relationship to the next programming period?	 • Not treated, or in conjunction with other monitoring data reporting • • •

Annex 4

Environmental Assessment of Projects During 2007–2013

The following guidance and form will be incorporated into the EURA 2007 information system.

The attached form is used by the applicant to assess the environmental impacts of a project proposal. The potential impacts are marked using the symbols ++/+/0/-. The assessment concerns all projects and should indicate whether a project is

Environmentally neutral: 0
Environmentally beneficial: + (minor beneficial effect) or ++ (significant beneficial effect)
Environmentally harmful: - (minor adverse effect)

Impact	(++/+/0/-)	Description
1. Impacts on climate change		
Improving energy efficiency		
Increasing the use of renewable energy		
Mitigating the risks of climate change		
Reducing the amount of fossil CO_2 emissions		
2. Impacts on emissions		
Water		
Soil		
Air		
3. Impacts on production and consumption		
Reducing the amount of waste		
Waste re-use and recycling		
Energy and material efficiency		
Use of local renewable raw materials and services		
4. Impacts on the natural and built environment		
Landscape		
Cultural environment		
Biodiversity		
Natura 2000 sites		
5. Impacts on people		
Living conditions and the attractiveness of living areas		
Health		
Safety		

Impact	(++/+/0/-)	Description
6. Impacts on transport		
Curbing the increase of private car traffic		
Reducing the need of shipping		
Improving logistics		
Percentage of public transport and pedestrian traffic		
7. Impacts on research and training		
Environmental technology		
Use of environmental management systems		
Environmental knowhow and awareness		

Annex 5

Guidance on Project Scoring

Suggested approach for scoring the environmental criteria recommended in Section 6.1

1. Positive climate and environmental impacts (max. 5 points)

Project's positive climate contribution (0–2 points)
0 = none
1 = indirect (e.g. cuts down emissions indirectly, related R&D projects, etc)
2 = direct and/or supports the specific climate objectives of the programme

Project's positive environmental contribution (0–2 points)
0 = none
1 = any positive environmental linkage
2 = supports the specific environmental objectives of the programme

Assessed environmental impacts (0–1 points)
0 = mostly negative or neutral
1 = the project is environmentally beneficial

2. Environmental benefits (max. 5 points)

Applicable to all priority axes

Project's positive environmental contribution (0–2 points)
0 = none
1 = any positive environmental linkage
2 = supports the specific environmental objectives of the programme

Assessed environmental impacts (0–2 points)
0 = negative
1 = mostly neutral
2 = the project is deemed environmentally beneficial

The consideration of the environment in the project application or plan (0–1 points)
0 = not considered
1 = considered somehow

DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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Author(s)	Tuomas Kallio			
Title of publication	**Environmental Integration in the Implementation of Finnish Structural Funds Programmes**			
Publication series and number	The Finnish Environment 27en/2009			
Theme of publication	Built Environment			
Abstract	The report examines the EU structural funds programme implementation process from an environmental perspective. The aim is to identify opportunities to take the environment into account and put forth proposals for better integration for the 2007–2013 programming period in Finland. The report analyses project selection criteria, environmental assessment of project proposals, environmental monitoring of the programmes, implementation reports and the potential contribution of evaluations. The focus is on selection criteria and monitoring. The results show that the environment is given rather good consideration in the implementation process. All applications for funding will undergo a process of environmental assessment. Compliance with sustainable development is an eligibility criterion in all the programmes. Proposals for a more consistent in applying environmental selection criteria approach are made, however. The SEA Act provides that the significant environmental effects of programmes be monitored in such a way as to allow for remedial action if adverse development occurs. The measures proposed in the current programming documents do not meet well this requirement. The environmental monitoring of the programmes can draw on the data produced in the environmental assessment of project proposals. Climate impacts, for example, could then be monitored by looking at how big a share of the total assistance has been given to projects with climate positive or with climate negative impacts. The EURA 2007 monitoring system should be used in collecting and processing the data. The benefit of this approach is that it takes advantage of an established procedure. It is proposed that a thematic environmental evaluation of the programmes be carried out during the programming period. The evaluation should look both at the progress made on programme sustainability and environmental objectives and at the environmental impacts of the programmes. The effectiveness of the mitigation measures currently in place (environmental assessment of projects, sustainability as an eligibility criterion) should be evaluated as well.			
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<tr><td>Tiivistelmä</td><td colspan="3">Raportissa tarkastellaan EU:n rakennerahasto-ohjelmien toimeenpanoa ympäristönäkökulmasta. Tavoitteena on tunnistaa eri mahdollisuuksia ottaa ympäristönäkökulma huomioon ohjelmien toteutusvaiheessa ja antaa kehittämisehdotuksia käynnissä olevaa ohjelmakautta (2007–2013) varten.

Tarkasteltavia osa-alueita ovat hankevalintakriteerit, hankkeiden ympäristövaikutusten arviointi, ympäristövaikutusten seuranta, toimeenpanoraportointi ja arvioinnit. Selvityksen painopiste on hankevalintakriteerien ja SOVA-lain vaatimukset täyttävän seurantajärjestelmän kehittämisessä.

Tulosten mukaan ympäristönäkökulma on esillä varsin hyvin ohjelmien toteutuksessa. Lähtökohtaisesti kaikista hanke-ehdotuksista tehdään ympäristövaikutusten arviointi ennen rahoituspäätöksen tekoa sekä hakijan että rahoittajatahon toimesta. Kestävä kehitys on välttämättömänä hankevalintakriteerinä kaikissa ohjelmissa. Valintakriteerejä ehdotetaan kuitenkin täydennettäviksi siten, että ympäristönäkökulma olisi niissä johdonmukaisemmin esillä.

SOVA-lain mukaan ohjelmien toteuttamista ja syntyviä merkittäviä ympäristövaikutuksia on seurattava siten, että seuranta mahdollistaa ryhtymisen ympäristöhaittoja torjuviin ja vähentäviin toimenpiteisiin. Nyt käytössä olevat seurantajärjestelyt eivät ole SOVA-lain näkökulmasta riittäviä.

Selvityksessä ehdotetaan, että ympäristövaikutusten seuranta perustuisi hankekohtaisten ympäristöarviointien tuottamaan tietoon. Seurannan kohteina olisivat tällöin esimerkiksi ilmastovaikutuksiltaan positiivisten, neutraalien ja negatiivisten hankkeiden rahoitusosuudet. Seurantatiedon kokoamisessa ja käsittelyssä tulisi hyödyntää EURA 2007 -järjestelmää. Lähestymistavan etuna on, että hankkeiden vaikutusten arviointi on jo nyt vakiintunut osa hankevalmistelua.

Ohjelmista ehdotetaan laadittavaksi temaattinen ympäristöarviointi ohjelmakauden aikana. Arvioinnissa käsiteltäisiin paitsi ohjelmien ympäristötavoitteiden toteutumista, myös niiden ympäristövaikutuksia. Lisäksi selvitettäväksi tulisi ympäristöhaittoja ehkäisevien ja lieventävien toimenpiteiden (YVA-menettelyt, kestävä kehitys välttämättömänä kriteerinä) toimivuuden arviointi.</td></tr>
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<tr><td>Publikationens delar/ andra publikationer inom samma projekt</td><td colspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Sammandrag</td><td colspan="4">Utredningen redogör genomförandet av EU:s strukturfondsprogram ur miljösynvinkel. Dess syfte är att identifiera möjligheter att beakta miljön när program genomförs samt att framlägga åtgärdsförslag för den pågående programperioden 2007-2013.

Utredningen behandlar urvalskriterier, miljökonsekvensbedömning av projekt, uppföljning av miljökonsekvenser, rapportering och utvärdering. Utredningens fokus är på urvalskriterier; ett annat mål är att utveckla ett uppfölningssystem som fyller de krav som SMB-lagen ställer.

Enligt analysen är miljöaspekter tämligen bra integrerade då program genomförs. I princip bedömer både den sökande och den finansierande myndigheten projekts miljökonsekvenser innan finansieringbeslut fattas. Den hållbara utvecklingen förekommer som ett av de obligatoriska urvalskriterierna i alla program. Utredningen föreslår en mer genomgående inställning gällande urvalskriterier, de borde kompletteras så att miljösynvinkel betonas.

SMB-lagen kräver att man ser till att programmens genomförande och deras ansenliga miljökonsekvenser uppföljas så att åtgärder vid behov kan vidtas i syftet att förebygga och minska miljöolägenheter. De aktuella uppföljningsåtgärderna är bristfälliga med hänsyn till detta krav.

Utredningen föreslår att miljökonsekvensers uppföljning skall baseras på information producerat i de miljökonsekvensbedömningar som utföras i samband med projekt. Som indikatorer kunde man exempelvis använda andelet finansiering anvisat till klimatpositiv, -neutral eller -negativ projekt. EURA 2007 systemet borde kunna utnyttjas i datainsamling och -behandling. Fördelen är att miljökonsekvensbedömning redan är en vedertagen del av projektförberedelse.

Dessutom rekommenderar utredningen att en tematisk miljöutvärdering av program företas under programperioden. Utvärderingen skulle behandla både miljömålens och miljökonsenkvensernas förverkligande. Därtill borde den utvärdera funktionaliteten av de åtgärder som syftar till att avvärja skadliga miljökonsekvenser (MKB-procedurer, den hållbara utvecklingen som ett obligatoriskt urvalskriterium).</td></tr>
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ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRUCTURAL FUNDS PROGRAMMES IN FINLAND

Several structural funds programmes co-funded by the European Union will be implemented in Finland during the programming period 2007–2013. Sustainable development as a cross-cutting principle guides both European Structural Funds programme preparation and implementation.

This report aims to provide a framework for integrating environmental considerations into the implementation of these programmes. The focus will be on the four Regional Competitiveness and Employment programmes funded from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF programmes), but the results can be applied to all types of structural funds programmes as well as to national regional development

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